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As Government are aware, it is essential that in order to produce fibre of a bright colour, the coconuts should be cut from the trees about the tenth month. If they are cut later, the quality deteriorates, for, as the ripening goes on, the nuts get exceedingly lignified and become so brown and brittle that the value of the fibre derived therefrom decreases very materially. At Ambajipet, considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining coconuts of the required maturity for purposes of retting and those secured could only be obtained at a cost which left little or no margin of profit in converting the fibre into yarn. The merchants of Ambajipet do not husk the coconuts, as their trade is chiefly in copras, for which the coconuts with husks are allowed to dry for over a month after they are cut from the trees. About 2,500 coconuts of the required maturity were however secured for conducting the experiment and the husks peeled and soaked in pits without delay and in accordance with the methods adopted on the West Coast.

4. In order to ensure strict adherence to West Coast methods, the services of a trained coir maistri were obtained through the Director of Industries, Travancore, and the retting operations were carried out by him. The Weaving Superintendent, Samalkot, paid frequent visits to the site to supervise the work of the maistri and to watch and report the progress of the experiments. The husks were left to decompose for nearly nine months, as is usually done in Cochin, and they were stirred at frequent intervals in this period, to help speedy fermentation.

Recently, several specimens of the best retted husks were removed from the pits, and were washed and well squeezed in cold water to get rid of the mud and noxious smell. The husks were then beaten and fibres extracted from them were spun into yarn by hand.

5. The yarns produced from the soaked husks are no doubt comparatively stronger than those made locally from unsoaked dried husks of the copra variety, but the colour is so dark that it would be impossible to market them at a fair price. Ambajipet is nearly 20 miles from the sea and the Kausika Drain which is somewhat narrow, does not, it was found, adequately possess a uniform and gentle ebb and flow. During the rainy months, the water from the drain overflows for nearly three months and carries with it a large quantity of silt into the pits which to a certain extent is responsible for the dark colour of the fibre.

Some of the specimens of soaked husks and the yarns obtained were examined by the Leather Research Chemist and in his opinion the dark colour of the fibre is due to the presence of iron in the water. Again, the fibre was not devoid of pithy matter and consequently the yarn was lacking in softness and feel.

6. On the whole, therefore, the retting operations conducted have not yielded satisfactory results and I am inclined to think that the selection of a site nearly 20 miles away from the sea was not a happy one and that the experiment was not conducted under ideal conditions. As Government are aware, Dr. Marsden in his research found that for the effective retting of coconut husks all that was required was suitable water conditions, i.e., a gentle ebb and flow of water and a warm temperature, but it was found, as a result of the experiments, that the above conditions were not present in Ambajipet in any marked degree.

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7. The commercial aspect of the experiments also does not appear bright. As already pointed out, this part of the East Coast is mainly a copra centre and dry husks serve very useful purpose for fuel. Hence husks of suitable maturity can only be obtained at a high price. Again, female workers, who are already accustomed to spin coir, demand a wage of 4 annas a day, if they are required to work near the soaking pits, under factory conditions. It might be advantageous to distribute the soaked husks to the workers in their own homes and thus turn out marketable fibre at a lesser cost. But, the high prices for husks and dark colour of the fibre obtained militate against the successful marketing of the product.

8. For the reasons explained above, I do not think it advisable to continue the work in Ambajipet.

APPENDIX X.

[Vide answer to question No. 1443 asked by Mr. K. V. R. Swami at the meeting of the Legislative Council held on the 25th January 1928, page 257 supra.]

Statement showing the strength and distribution of Armed Reserves in the Madras Presidency.

Place at which located.	Inspectors.	Sergeants.	Jamadar.	Havildar-Majors.	Head constables.	Constables.
1. Chatrapur	1	2	..	1	9	88
2. Russellkonda	..	1	..		5	55
3. Vizagapatam	1	2	..	1	10	129
4. Koraput	1	1	..	1	8	90
5. Cocanada	1	2	..	1	11	118
6. Masulipatam	1	2	..	1	10	110
7. Guntur	1	2	..	1	10	115
8. Nellore	1	2	..	1	8	81
9. Kurnool	1	2	..	1	10	118
10. Bellary	1	2	..	1	9	104
11. Anantapur	1	2	..	1	8	83
12. Cuddapah	1	2	..	1	9	109
13. Chittoor	1	2	..	1	8	85
14. Vellore	1	2	..	1	10	138
15. St Thomas' Mount ..	1	2	..	1	8	80
16. Salem	1	3	..	1	14	170
17. Cuddalore	1	2	..	1	9	104
18. Tanjore	1	2	..	1	9	107
19. Trichinopoly	1	2	..	1	10	110
20. Madura	1	2	..	1	10	111
21. Ramnad	1	2	..	1	9	94
22. Kamudi	1	1	..	1	4	51
23. Sivakasi	1	2	..	1	7	88
24. Palamcottah (with Tinnevelly detachment).	1	4	..	2	18	227
25. Coimbatore	1	2	..	1	9	111
26. Calicut	1	2	.	1	9	103
27. Cannanore	..	1	..	..	5	56
28. Mangalore	1	2	..	1	9	100
29. Madras City	1	5	1	..	38	370
Total ..	27	60 *	1	27	293	3,305

* Excludes eight sergeants of the casualty reserve.